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ABSTRACT

This essay traces the liberal to conservative changes in U.S. political attitudes and the effect these changes had on progressive and essentialist theories of education from the 1940s to the present. Focus is on the role Arthur Bestor played in these developments. Bestor was a leader of the anti-progressive movement during the 1950s and the most widely read educational reformer of that time. Initially the main difference between Bestor and his opponents was the relative place he gave to social problems and the liberal disciplines, but he grew increasingly conservative in his vision of educational reform, promoted essentialism in education, and called for a national commitment to liberal education. Bestor's educational background, ideologies, theories of curriculum, and opponents are discussed. Debates regarding teaching mainstream culture versus cultural pluralism, issues which divided Bestor and his progressive opponents during the 1950s, continue to divide liberal educators today. The document argues that because the Cold War is over and the political crisis that inflamed educational differences between progressives and essentialists is gone, it is time for progressive educators to acknowledge the value of Bestor's ideas and bring the educational Cold War to an end. Contains 153 references. (MM)

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by Burton Weltman

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RECONSIDERING ARTHUR BESTOR:

A POSTMORTEM FOR THE COLD WAR IN EDUCATION?

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1. Cold Wars and Culture Wars.

As the 20th century closes, the Cold War has ended but the culture wars it spawned have not abated. Liberals and conservatives continue to do battle along lines drawn during the 1940's, when fears of totalitarianism permeated political and cultural thinking, and liberals and conservatives promoted competing models of totalitarianism. Liberals, focussing on the threat of fascism, portrayed totalitarianism as an outgrowth of conservatism (Neumann, 1944). Conservatives, focussing on Communism, portrayed totalitarianism as a result of liberalism (Hayek, 1944). With fascism as the enemy during World War II, the liberal model prevailed and conservatives were on the defensive for a time.

At the end of the war, liberalism so dominated political and cultural life in America that the literary critic Lionel Trilling (1950) was expressing a common opinion when he claimed that "In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" (p.VII). Formulated during the early 1900's as progressive theories of politics, history and education, liberal ideology was based on suspicion of the profit motive and belief in social legislation, social planning and international cooperation (Wallace, 1934). With the partial exception of the 1920's, liberal ideas became increasingly influential during the first half of the 20th century. By the 1940's, progressivism had become Americans' all-purpose philosophy of public life and discussion of most social issues revolved around liberal ideas. Among historians, progressivism, with its emphasis on social progress through social conflict, was the predominant

theory of American history (Schlesinger, Sr., 1949/1964). In education, progressivism, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary curricula, child-centered methods and social democratic organization, was the predominant theory of schooling (Cremin, 1961, p.328). "Progressive" was widely used in the 1940's as a term of approval to describe and promote almost everything from new styles of music and dance to consumer products. Even Senator Robert Taft, leader of the conservative wing of the Republican Party, was calling himself a liberal (Viereck, 1949/1960, p.20). Given this ideological hegemony, liberals emerged from the war expecting greater opportunities to put their ideas into social and educational practice (Schlesinger, Sr., 1950).

This was not to be. The postwar world proved more difficult than most Americans had expected and by the late 1940's, many were increasingly frustrated by international events they could not control and domestic problems they could not solve even with the best intentions and greatest resources. With fascism defeated and a Cold War against the Communist Soviet Union beginning, a conservative anti-communism became the most popular explanation of America's problems (Cooke, 1950, p.9; Markowitz, 1973, p.211). Led by Representative Richard Nixon and Senator Joseph McCarthy, conservatives pointed to Communists, along with their liberal allies and dupes, as the main threats to domestic tranquility and national security.

From the late 1940's through the early 1990's, Communism was the touchstone against which most political, social and educational positions were measured. Conservatives attacked liberals for being soft on Communism, a soft-headedness and soft-heartedness that ostensibly permeated liberal ideas about everything from crime to welfare to education. Liberalism, they claimed, undermined the moral, intellectual and political strength of America, thereby encouraging a Communist victory (Buckley & Bozell, 1954). Liberals responded with an anti-Communism that blamed conservatives for creating the hardships in which Communism thrived. But liberals also attacked each other, looking for someone to blame for the success of conservatism. A new

breed of liberal realists attacked old-style progressives as weak and sought to outflank conservatives with their own hard-nosed policies (Schlesinger, Jr., 1949/1962, p.36; also McAuliffe, 1978, p.48). In education, self-styled Essentialists, led by Arthur Bestor, promoted a hard-core disciplinary curriculum and attacked progressives as mushy (Bestor, Jr., 1953a). With conservatives red-baiting liberals and liberals attacking each other, conservatism seemed to increasing numbers of people to be the safer choice in a perilous world (Fowler, 1978; McAuliffe, 1978; Pells, 1985). By the end of the 1950's, "progressivism" had become synonymous with political weakness and educational incompetence. By the end of the 1980's, "liberal" had become a dirty word. Overall, with the partial exception of the 1960's, conservative ideologies gained increasing ascendancy as a result of the Cold War from the 1940's to the 1990's.

Then in the early 1990's, Communism suddenly disappeared as a viable threat and with it went the main organizing principle of the last half-century of political and cultural debate in America. With the demise of Communism should have come the end of the culture wars that the Cold War had spawned. It should have, but it hasn't. In education, the old charges of soft-headedness (read "Communist dupe") and hard-heartedness (read "fascist pig") still reverberate between conservatives and liberals. Likewise, liberals are still split into warring camps of Essentialists and progressives, battling over essentially the same issues as in the 1950's: developing national standards versus localized curricula, teaching mainstream culture versus cultural diversity, using standardized tests versus authentic assessment, and teaching history versus social studies. The current political and educational situation is confused and confusing, but it offers opportunities for overcoming differences that have divided and disabled liberal educators for the last half-century. This paper is an essay in the origins of the culture wars in education. Arthur Bestor played a crucial part in these developments and the moral of his story may provide a postmortem for the Cold War in education.

2. Reconsidering Arthur Bestor.

Arthur Bestor was a leader of the anti-progressive movement during the 1950s' and the most widely read educational reformer of the decade (Cremin, 1961, p.344; Karier, 1985, p.233; Kliebard, 1986, p.260; Lybarger, 1991, p.8). A proponent of an Essentialist curriculum based on the liberal arts and sciences, Bestor vehemently attacked progressives for allegedly promoting low brow curricula and lax educational standards. Bestor's speeches, articles and books precipitated a split among liberal educational reformers which, coming during the height of the anti-Communist crusade in America, took on the coloration of the Cold War.

Bestor was a liberal historian whose long career spanned from the 1930's to his death in 1994 (Marmor, 1995). Bestor's historical writings reflected his politics and consisted, for the most part, of sympathetic studies of 19th century utopian socialism and unsympathetic studies of conservative legal theories. He described utopian socialism as a mainstream movement that could have and should have succeeded. He portrayed conservative legal theories as subversions and perversions of mainstream liberal ideas (Bestor, Jr., 1961b; 1964; 1973; 1974). Intellectually, Bestor descended from an ardent liberal tradition. He was particularly influenced by his father, Arthur Bestor, Sr., an innovator in adult education; Ralph Gabriel, his doctoral thesis advisor in history at Yale University during the 1930's; and, William Bagley, his mentor when he taught education at Teachers College, Columbia University during the 1930's. Each of these mentors operated within a progressive political and intellectual framework, although each also differed with their progressive colleagues in ways that presaged Bestor's campaign against progressivism.

Bestor is usually portrayed as a disillusioned liberal who, having become appalled at the inadequacy of America's schools, recognized the bankruptcy of progressive educational ideas and realized the wisdom of conservative theories (Kirk, 1990, p.1). Based on this portrait, Bestor has often been cited with approval by conservatives and condemned by progressives. The thesis of

this paper is that this picture is wrong. The differences between Bestor and his progressive opponents were not as great as they appeared in the heat of battle during the 1950's and not nearly as great as they have been portrayed, by both Bestor's conservative supporters and progressive detractors, in the decades since. The paper argues that Bestor, in fact, maintained an underlying commitment to most of the progressives' political and educational goals and methods, a commitment which may point the way to reconciliation among educational reformers today.

The main educational difference between Bestor and his progressive opponents was in the relative place they gave to social problems and the liberal disciplines in their proposed curricula. Progressives promoted a curriculum that started with social problems and used the various disciplines as means to solve them. Bestor wanted to focus on the liberal disciplines and use social problems to illustrate them. The difference was merely one of emphasis not one of principle. Underlying this minor difference in curricula was, however, a major difference in political and historical analyses, a difference that reflected the differing views of Bestor and his progressive opponents as to the best way for liberals to respond to the Cold War.

The basic question which divided them was whether liberals should respond to the threat of Communism and to attacks from conservatives by stressing their own traditionalism and mainstream ideas, or by stressing their radicalism and their program for reforming American traditions? Bestor favored the former, most progressives the latter (Markowitz, 1973). Like Gunnar Myrdal, whose book The American Dilemma (1944) greatly influenced postwar liberals, Bestor believed that Americans share a common set of liberal ideals, an American Creed. Myrdal, relying heavily on the historical work of Bestor's mentor Ralph Gabriel, argued that Americans must fulfill their American Creed in order to extend their social democracy (pp.XIX,.XLVIII). Bestor feared that the American Creed was crumbling under the attacks of Communists and conservatives. For Bestor, the hourglass of social change was half empty and time was running

out to save progressive social values. He concluded that only a school curriculum that emphasized the liberal disciplines could resurrect America's liberal tradition (Bestor, Jr., 1952d; 1955a; 1955c; 1959).

Most progressives during the late 1940's and early 1950's saw the hourglass of social change as half full. They argued that the main threat to American liberalism was the lag of Americans' social ideas behind the social and economic realities of American life. The historian Merle Curti, a former colleague and close friend of Bestor at Teachers College, claimed, for example, that the individualism Americans had inherited from their laissez-faire, agrarian past was tragically inconsistent with the collectivism of 20th century urban, industrial society. This inconsistency paved the way for authoritarian demagogues – both Communist and McCarthyist - who preyed on the anxieties of people trying to understand their collectivist present in terms from their individualistic past. Curti argued that, rather than trying to regenerate the outmoded liberalism of the 19th century, liberals should promote pro-social ideas more consistent with modern industrialism and urbanism (1953, p.31; 1955, p.25). Although Bestor and Curti shared the same social democratic goals, their social and historical analyses of how best to achieve these goals differed. Curti's analysis exemplified the imperative behind progressives' call for an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasized social problems. Bestor's analysis provided the imperative for his emphasis on the liberal disciplines.

Bestor's differences with progressives such as Curti were about curriculum and not goals or methods. Bestor was committed to progressive political, social and educational goals, including cultural pluralism and equal educational outcomes. He also promoted the child-centered and social-centered methods fostered by progressives. Bestor complained, however, that many educators were using progressive curricula to promote intellectual extremism and cultural nihilism. In the context of the Cold War during the early 1950's, a time when everything liberal

was under attack from the Right, Bestor considered these educators to be *agent provacateurs* and traitors to the social democratic cause (Bestor, Jr., 1955c). As such, Bestor began his anti-progressive campaign as an effort to purify and protect progressivism.

It did not, however, end that way. Bestor initially seemed to believe that the defeat of progressive educators would, somehow, lead automatically to an apotheosis of liberal educational and social values (Bestor, Jr., 1952a, pp.114-115; 1955b, p.418). Instead, Bestor increasingly found himself supporting conservative positions with which he seemed to be uncomfortable and helped to pave the way for changes in politics and education that he later seemed to regret. While he helped to destroy progressivism as an educational movement, Bestor did not succeed in either resurrecting the liberal disciplines in public schools or resuscitating the liberal tradition in American politics and culture. In this context, the story of Bestor's anti-progressive campaign can be viewed in different ways. In the view of his supporters, Bestor was a hero in the struggle against a vile progressivism (Ravitch, 1983, p.76). To his critics, Bestor was traitor who abandoned his more radical ideals and colleagues under fire, and who sought fame and influence by adapting his views to the more conservative post-World War II climate, adopting ever more conservative positions to satisfy his ever more conservative audience during the 1950's.

In still another view, however, Bestor was a pathetic and even tragic figure - a progressive who attacked radicalism and espoused conservatism in order to save liberalism, and came to regret it. Bestor's underlying fear was that schools dominated by progressives would train teachers and students who were not carriers of the liberal tradition and that, as a result, the liberal tradition would be forgotten and lost, leading to a Dark Age in America. Bestor was in his view trying to save the American Creed and the American way of life (Bestor, Jr., 1955c; Myrdal, 1944, pp.9-15, 212, 1023). The stakes were high, and to him they justified the doubtful alliances he made with conservatives and the down-and-dirty tactics he used against progressives. The

rules of evidence and decorum did not apply in this conflict. Books and articles were propaganda weapons, not scholarly tools. Progressivism was an enemy and Bestor conducted his educational campaign as a no-holds-barred war, not an intellectual debate. Although Bestor seemed to know that the differences between him and his progressive opponents were never as great as the differences between him and most of his conservative supporters, he appeared to be unable to stop himself once he had begun.

3. Bestor's Progressive Background.

(a) Chautauqua Progressivism. Arthur Bestor was born in 1908 at Chautauqua, an adult education community in western New York, where his father, Arthur Bestor, Sr. was director of Chautauqua's summer educational programs. Bestor, Sr. had graduated from the University of Chicago, where he taught history from 1904 to 1912. Bestor, Sr. was a personal friend of William Rainey Harper, president of both the University and Chautauqua, and Harper hired him for teaching positions at both institutions. Harper was a strong adherent of the Social Gospel, a form of liberal Protestantism that promoted social democratic reform as an emanation of the Lord and that provided a spiritual impetus to the progressive political movement (Susman, 1984, 21, 174; Cremin, 1988, p.24). Bestor, Sr. was also a colleague of John Dewey at the University and succeeded Dewey as adult education director at Chautauqua. Bestor, Sr. studied and taught at the University during the period that Dewey, George Herbert Meade and others were establishing the "Chicago School" of social sciences based on pragmatic philosophy and progressive politics (Adler, 1988, p.27).

Bestor, Sr. (1917a) promoted progressive theories of politics, historiography and education, reflecting the influence of the Social Gospel and the Chicago School. He advocated a participatory democracy and a collectivist economy, calling for a "socialism of the state" with "more direct [citizen] participation in government and a real control [by government] of

everything" (pp.8-9). He promoted public school curricula based on the interests of students of all social classes and all ages and schools which would function as community social centers for adults as well as children (Bestor, Sr., 1917b; Bestor, Sr., 1934a; Bestor, Sr., 1934b). Although he was an active supporter of World War I and, like Dewey, a believer that war-time cooperation would be the precursor of peace-time collectivism, Bestor, Sr. opposed censorship of anti-war activists by the government and by vigilantes (Bestor, Sr., 1917a). Throughout his life, Bestor, Sr. served in organizations and on government commissions in support of social welfare programs, the New Deal, and adult educational programs. He was a nationally known advocate for educational reform (M.A.C., 1944). In 1915, Bestor, Sr. became president of Chautauqua, a position which he held until his death in 1944. Under his leadership, Chautauqua went from a moribund institution on its last legs to a thriving model of experimental adult education (Morrison, 1974, pp.87-88).

After Bestor, Sr. left the University of Chicago to take on the full-time directorship of Chautauqua, the Bestor family alternated during each year between residences in Chautauqua and New York City. Raised in a household permeated with progressivism, Bestor went to progressive elementary and secondary schools where he thrived as a student. He attended the Lincoln School at Teachers College, Columbia University during the 1920's, which he described as "one of the most progressive schools in the country." Bestor lauded the education he received as combining the best of Dewey's progressive methodology with, as he later remembered it, a traditional liberal arts curriculum. He extolled the faculty as a community of "brilliant men and women" collectively devoted to bringing "the teaching of the basic disciplines to the highest perfection possible in the light of modern pedagogy" (Bestor, Jr., 1955b, p.140; see also Bestor, Jr., 1953a, p. 45).

Bestor followed professionally in his father's footsteps. Like his father, Bestor studied history, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1930 and a Ph.D. in American history in 1938 from Yale.

And like his father, who earned a law degree in 1919 from Colgate University, Bestor earned a law degree later in life, receiving a LL.D. from Lincoln University in 1959. Finally, like his father, Bestor taught history. He was an instructor at Yale from 1930 to 1936, then a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University from 1936 to 1942, Stanford University from 1942 to 1946, the University of Illinois from 1947 to 1962, and the University of Washington from 1962 to 1986 (Marquis, 1988).

During the early 1930's, Bestor also edited the Chautauqua newspaper and often lectured on American history at Chautauqua. Bestor was at this time a follower of the progressive historians Charles Beard and Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. (Bestor, Jr., 1932; Morrison, 1974, p.114). In 1934, Bestor published a history and bibliography of Chautauqua. He lauded Chautauqua as an idyllic educational community that had pioneered adult education for all people and praised Chautauqua's interdisciplinary curriculum, which was a mix of modern literature, modern history and popular science (Bestor, Jr., 1934). Chautauqua was for Bestor an almost utopian ideal, an intellectual community of scholars and ordinary people cooperating in a life of the mind. Chautauqua was also a haven for progressives, and Bestor lived from his birth through the middle 1930's in the ambit of progressivism at Chautauqua.

(b) Progressive Consensus. In the mid-1930's, Bestor fell under the dual influences of William Bagley, his senior colleague at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Ralph Gabriel, his doctoral thesis advisor at Yale University. Gabriel was a leading critic of the emphasis of progressive historians on conflict in American history, and the proponent of a new emphasis on continuity. During the late 1930's, as Bestor was working on his doctoral thesis, Gabriel was working on his seminal book, The Course of American Democratic Thought (1940). In this book, Gabriel portrayed American development as the result of a persistent democratic faith and liberal consensus, which underlay the country's changes from a frontier to an agricultural

to an industrial society (pp.13, 15, 19, 22).

A proponent of progressive social goals, Gabriel (1940) claimed that "The essence of democracy is co-operation among free men of good will" (p.338) and exulted that "Since 1865 the United States has moved toward a national collectivism" (p.414), a movement which had recently produced the New Deal (p.416). He claimed that the liberal consensus that prevailed in the 1930's and 1940's had governed the United States from its founding (Gabriel, 1940, p.13). In light of this long-term progressive movement, Gabriel claimed that progressive historians had overstated the class conflicts and conservative forces in American society. Gabriel worried that by focussing on conflicts, crises and conservatives, progressive historians might undermine the liberal consensus among Americans and open the door to conservative social theories. Based on this concern, Bestor adopted Gabriel's historical ideas and in his own work looked for continuity and consensus as the cause of social change (Bestor, Jr., 1932; 1948b, p.298; 1961a, p.136; 1962a, p.103; 1962b, p.5; 1964, p.331; 1971, p.118).

Gabriel's concerns did not go unheeded by progressives such as Merle Curti, Bestor's friend and colleague at Teachers College. Bestor and Curti shared an interest in, and sympathy for, 19th century utopian socialist movements. Curti (1943), who became the dean of postwar progressive historians, attempted in his monumental book The Growth of American Thought to reconcile progressive and consensus theories. Bestor assisted Curti on this book and in this effort (p.XIX; see Higham, 1983, pp.210-211).

(c) Progressive Essentialism. While working on his doctoral dissertation at Yale, Bestor took a teaching position at Teachers College, where his consensus views of American history fit naturally with William Bagley's Essentialist views of education (Bestor, Jr., 1937; 1938b; 1938c). Teachers College was at that time the mecca of progressive social reconstructionists, who wanted to use schools to reform society (Karier, 1985, p.236). With Dewey overseeing matters from

across the street in the Department of Philosophy, Bestor's senior colleagues at Teachers College included the leading progressive lights: William Heard Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg and George Counts. Merle Curti was a follower of Rugg and Counts.

Bestor did not, however, join the majority party of progressives at Teachers College, choosing instead to join a dissident group of educators who advocated what they called Essentialism in education (Kandel, 1961, p.106). The group was led by William Bagley, a highly regarded curricularist who had been recruited to Teachers College in order to counter Kilpatrick's influence. Kilpatrick promoted an interdisciplinary curriculum that he thought should emerge from children's interests rather than from textbooks or other pre-packaged materials. Kilpatrick's textbook, Foundations of Method, was by the far the most widely used book in schools of education between the two world wars. Bagley and other Essentialists rejected the interdisciplinary and multicultural curricula proposed by Kilpatrick and his colleagues and promoted the traditional liberal disciplines instead (Cremin, Shannon & Townsend, 1954, p.250; Kandel, 1961; Kliebard, 1986, p.229; Tenenbaum, 1951, p.224).

A self-styled liberal, Bagley had trained many leading progressives, including Harold Rugg, and supported most of the progressives' social and educational goals. Bagley advocated a cooperative economy and a comprehensive social welfare system. Bagley supported the expansion of secondary schools to include the masses of working class students, and he thought schools should promote progressive social ideas rather than stay neutral on social issues or support the status quo. As a contributor to the Amercian Historical Association Commission on the Social Studies in the early 1930's, Bagley (1934) supported the Commission's recommendation that progressive social goals be the core of the social studies curriculum (pp.120-122; see also, Bagley & Alexander, 1937, p.73; Kandel, 1938, p.70).

Bagley differed with Kilpatrick on what sort of curriculum best supported progressive social goals. Like the later consensus historians and the proponents of an American Creed, Bagley (1934) argued that educators needed to transmit a common cultural core to students, to reinforce the democratic heritage that had previously fostered progressive social change in America (p.145; see also, Kandel, 1938, p.96; Kandel, 1943, p.83). Bagley feared that America's democratic heritage could be easily lost if it was not consciously and consistently transmitted from generation to generation (p.33; see also, Kandel, 1938, p.165). He (1937) complained that Kilpatrick and other progressives were cutting their own throats by diluting the traditional curriculum and making high school too easy for working class students. Progressives were not doing any favor either to these students or to their country by trying to deny them the sort of academic education that would make them culturally literate and politically responsible (p.64). In sum, Bagley's rejection of progressive curricula was based on his belief that progressive social ideas were best reinforced by the liberal disciplines. He was concerned that any sort of interdisciplinary or multicultural relativism would threaten progressive values and make possible a conservative backlash. Based on this concern, Bestor adopted Bagley's educational ideas.

Bagley's comments did not go unheeded by progressives such as John Dewey. Dewey (1938) noted that since both progressives and Essentialists wanted students to think critically about society and reflectively about their own ideas, the theoretical differences between progressivism and Essentialism had little practical meaning except at the extremes. At one extreme, some progressives shaded into a child-centered romanticism in which the teacher was supposed to merely follow the child's interest without any adult guidance. At the other extreme, some Essentialists shaded into a conservatism in which the teacher was supposed to merely transmit traditional culture without any critical or reflective thought. Dewey tried to reconcile progressivism with Essentialism, particularly chastising those progressives who eschewed the

liberal disciplines in favor of a completely child-centered curriculum. Bestor (1953a) adopted Dewey's views and cited them against progressives during the 1950's (pp.50-51).

During the 1930's and early 1940's, the challenges raised by Bagley and Gabriel were seen largely as intra-family disputes among liberals. But with the coming of the Cold War, differences between liberal Essentialists and progressive educators, and between liberal consensus historians and progressive historians, were magnified. Family feuds became civil wars. In turn, conservatives increasingly adopted Essentialism in education (Smith, 1949, p.90) and consensus views of history (Nash, 1979, p.76; Sternsher, 1975, pp.5-10) as ideological weapons against liberal reformers, fighting in the name of traditional conservatism against subversive liberalism (Bell, 1949; Boorstin, 1953). The resulting splits among liberal educators and the overall damage to liberalism in politics and education persist to the present.

4. Bestor as a Historian: Utopian Dreams

Bestor's historical work reflected the combined influences of his father's Chautauqua progressivism, Bagley's Essentialism and Gabriel's consensus historiography. Bestor's historical work was done mainly during two periods. From 1938 through the early 1950's, he published works on early 19th century utopian socialist communities in America, first the Fourierist communes of the 1840's and then the Owenite communes of the 1820's. Bestor's major works were his doctoral dissertation American Phalanxes: A Study of Fourierist Socialism in the United States (1938a) and his book Backwoods Utopias (1950), a highly regarded study of Owenism. During the 1950's, while campaigning for educational reform, Bestor continued his interest in utopianism but wrote very little history. Beginning in 1959, after he received his law degree, Bestor wrote articles on legal history, dealing primarily with constitutional issues in eighteenth and nineteenth century America and with the Watergate crisis of the 1970's.

(a) Utopian Socialism. Bestor was attracted to utopian socialist communities as peaceful experiments in immediate social change. Unlike revolutionary change that was immediate but invariably based on violence, and incremental reform that was often peaceful but took forever to complete, utopian communes provided workable models of the good life for the rest of society to emulate. Voluntary, self-consciously experimental and innovative, utopianism was for Bestor a particularly American form of social reform, whose core concepts could and should still be followed by present-day policy-makers (Bestor, Jr., 1950, pp.4, 10-16).

Inspired by his childhood at Chautauqua, Bestor's doctoral dissertation (1938a) examined communes in western New York State near Chautauqua, an area which he described as filled with "a restless, visionary, utopian spirit" (p.21). Like Chautauqua, utopian communes were case studies in community and consensus building through education (Bestor, Jr., 1934). Anticipating his educational campaign of the 1950's, Bestor's studies of utopian communities focussed on propaganda, education and leadership as the keys to social reform.

Bestor was fascinated with propaganda techniques, and the utopians Robert Owen and Arthur Brisbane were model propagandists whom Bestor tried to emulate during the 1950's. While education and scholarship were, for Bestor, the high road to truth, and propaganda and politics were the low road to power, he deemed both as necessary for any social movement. Owen and the Fourierist Brisbane skillfully combined scholarship with publicity, and successfully portrayed their utopian proposals as mainstream ideas. Brilliant propaganda campaigns were the key to the establishment of their communes (Bestor, Jr., 1938a, p.33; 1947, pp.142, 146-147; 1950, pp.96-105; see 1941, pp.2-4 for a discussion of Brook Farm and propaganda techniques).

Bestor also focussed on the educational proposals and practices of the utopians. As an instructor at Teachers College while writing his dissertation on Fourierism, and as a professor of educational history at Stanford while writing about Owenism, Bestor was interested in how the

utopians' ideas compared with modern methods. Bestor described the educational proposals of Fourier and Owen as essentially similar to those of William Bagley and the Essentialists, emphasizing child-centered methods and a liberal arts and sciences curriculum. Bestor extolled the school operated at Owen's New Harmony commune by William Maclure, a disciple of Pestolozzi, as a model of public education devoted to scientific study, a community within the larger commune, a little utopia that was in but not of the larger society. The utopians' schools reflected their core concepts and would have perpetuated their ideals, if the communes had survived long enough for education to take effect (Bestor, Jr., 1938a, pp.225, 230; 1948a, p.399; 1950, pp.134-135, 141-142, 192).

Utopian communities failed because of poor leadership, Bestor claimed, not because their ideas were unrealistic or unpopular. Unlike self-styled liberal realists, such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who ridiculed 19th century utopians as fools and dismissed their communes as historically irrelevant (Schlesinger, Jr., 1944, p.364), Bestor (1938a) claimed that utopian socialism was a mainstream idea during the early 19th century, an idea that reflected the underlying consensus and the social and economic circumstances of the time (pp.4, 54; Bestor, Jr., 1953b/1970, p.250; 1957d/1970, p.269). Utopian communities failed because their leaders were brilliant innovators but poor administrators. While the hierarchies of traditional society can operate bureaucratically without strong leadership, the participatory democracies established in the utopian communities required strong leaders. Without them, the communities degenerated into chaos, with everyone trying to do everything and nothing getting done (Bestor, Jr., 1938a, pp.80, 103, 160, 197, 210, 212; 1940; 1950, pp.116, 211-215).

Bestor's work on utopianism was well received, and commentators were particularly impressed with his meticulous scholarship (Clark, 1950, p.282; Hodges, 1950, p.1006; Leopold, 1950, p.34; Sirjamaki, 1950, p.580; Spitz, 1950, p.20; Tyler, 1950, p.923). Backwoods Utopias

was re-issued several times and is still regarded as an important work on utopianism. Bestor continued to think and write about utopianism in the late 1950's after his foray into educational activism (Bestor, Jr., 1957b/1970; 1958a).

(b) The University as Utopia. With the industrialization and urbanization of America in the late 19th century, utopianism had to abandon its agricultural origins and take new forms. Bestor (1945) saw these new forms exemplified in educational institutions such as Chautauqua and the modern university (pp.18-30). The university was a novel combination of teaching and research. Previously, colleges had focussed on teaching, while most scholarship and scientific research had been done outside of academe. The university combined these functions and, in Bestor's view (1953d), exemplified "the ideal of a company of scholars engaged both in the advancement of knowledge and in the instruction of students" (pp.169-170). The successes of the university had been many. Undergraduate education had been improved by replacing the classical curriculum with modern liberal arts and sciences disciplines. Doctoral programs had raised research standards. Public policy had benefited from cooperation between professors and government agencies. Cultural standards throughout the country had been raised through outreach programs of adult education similar to Chautauqua (p.171).

At the same time, Bestor (1953d) complained, the university had failed "to impress its new standards of scholarship and competence" on teachers and on the professors of education who taught teachers (p.179). This single failure now threatened the whole enterprise because universities were being inundated by high school graduates who were not prepared for college-level work and who did not respect the importance of the liberal tradition taught by the liberal arts and sciences. The university as utopia, as a model of social democracy for America, was being undermined by the failure of the public schools to properly educate students in the liberal disciplines. The failure of the public schools was, in turn, a result of the influence of progressive

professors of education, traitors and subversives within the university community, who rejected the liberal disciplines and essentially eschewed academic standards altogether. Bestor concluded that in order to save the idea of the university as an ideal community, the public elementary and secondary schools and the schools of education within the university must be reformed.

This was a crisis that had to be met with strong leadership if the utopian promise of the 20th century university was not to go the way of the 19th century utopian communities, and with it the liberal ideals that had sustained American democracy since its inception. In the dedication to his book Backwoods Utopias, Bestor (1950) had memorialized his father's work in saving and rebuilding Chautauqua with the words "To the memory of MY FATHER, who studied history ere he made it" (p.V). In the early 1950's, as Bestor began his anti-progressive campaign in education, he seemed intent on emulating his father – having first studied history, he was now going to make it.

5. Bestor's Anti-Utopian Enemy: Life Adjustment Education.

Progressivism was the primary movement in American education during the first half of the 20th century (Cremin, 1961). Over that time, the movement took many different forms. During the 1930's, social reconstructionism was the main form of progressivism at Teachers College where Bestor taught. The main theme of reconstructionists was reflected in the question asked by George Counts (1932/1978) "Dare the school build a new social order?" That is, should schools facilitate social democratic reform, promoting cooperation instead of competition and pro-social values instead of individualism? Counts and other reconstructionists said "yes." So did Bestor (1953a), claiming that schools should be a means of reforming society (p.37).

During the 1940's, however, a new form of progressivism gained prominence: the life adjustment movement. It was the proponents of this movement who became the main targets of

Bestor's fury. Life adjustment was practical education in the problems of every day life, and proponents wanted to incorporate a small core of life adjustment courses into the high school curriculum. For Bestor, these courses epitomized the dilution of the liberal curriculum that he feared (Bestor, Jr., 1952c). The term "life adjustment" itself was antithetical to the high-minded idealism, the utopianism, with which he approached education. Bestor condemned life adjustment courses as a preparation for mass society, as a cultural degradation that paved the way for the demagoguery of fascists, Communists and other totalitarians (Bestor, Jr., 1952a, p.114; 1953a, pp.81-100). His attacks and those of other anti-progressives were so successful that even later generations of progressives have accepted this characterization of the program, and life adjustment has become synonymous with fuzzy-headed educational reform gone wrong (Church & Sedlak, 1976, p.404).

Life adjustment education was a response by a group of mid-western progressives to the end of the Depression and to demographic changes in the postwar era. Charles Prosser, a professor at the University of Minnesota, was the founder of the program (Button & Provenzo, 1983, p.286; Cremin, 1961, p.334). Prosser had since the 1910's been a leading promoter of vocational instruction as a means of extending secondary education to the working class (Curti, 1935, pp.559-560; Kliebard, 1986, p.111). In the early 1900's, high schools had been the province of middle and upper class students preparing for college. Only 10% of high-school-age youth were in high school, and 75% of high school graduates went to college. By the 1930's, in part as a result of Prosser's work, high schools had been opened up to working class youth. Some 50% of high-school-age youth were in high school, with many of them in vocational education programs. By the 1940's, however, almost 85% of high-school-age youth were in high school, but college preparation programs and vocational education programs each attracted only 25% of these students. Prosser wanted to develop an educational program which would appeal to

the remaining 50% of students who were being served by neither the college preparation nor the vocational education programs (Button & Provenzo, 1983, p.283; Butts & Cremin, 1953, p.592).

Prosser (1939) proposed to supplement the traditional liberal arts and sciences curriculum with life-centered courses that started with everyday problems and then proceeded to more complex intellectual issues, serving as an introduction and inducement to academic work (Elicker, 1951, p.19). Knowledge of the sort taught in the traditional disciplines remained Prosser's goal, but his means of conveying this knowledge were untraditional. Students would solve personal and practical problems as a vehicle of their intellectual development (Elicker, 1951, pp.8-9; Zeran, 1953, p.48). In order to keep curricula up-to-date, proponents of life adjustment education proposed to continuously survey and meet with parents and other members of the community to discuss the content of the courses. Life adjustment education would, thereby, help integrate parents and other community members into the schools while also helping to integrate students into their community (Elicker, 1951, p.60; Prosser, 1951, p.9; Zeran, 1953, pp.1, 186).

Prosser's ideas were popular among professors in the Education Department at the University of Illinois/Champaign-Urbana. During the 1940's and 1950's, the University of Illinois was the mid-western center of progressivism and life adjustment education (Kliebard, 1986, p.255). The University boasted a faculty of twenty-eight professors of education, many trained at Teachers College, Columbia University. The Progressive Education Association Journal was published at the University. Progressives from the University promoted life adjustment programs through their connections with the Illinois State Department of Education and, as a result, the life adjustment program was widely implemented in Illinois schools (Karier, 1985, p.251).

Harold Hand was the leading proponent of life adjustment education at the University in the 1940's and 1950's (Ohles, 1978, 399; Tanner, 1980, p.731). A social reconstructionist in orientation, he hoped that life adjustment would further social reform through the schools (Hand,

1947a, p.195; 1947b, p.55). Toward this end, Hand (1948) proposed that the high school curriculum include a core of "common learnings," common both in being the same for all students, and in arising from the needs, interests and thoughts of common people. Such common learnings would constitute a popular culture in contra-distinction to a mass culture and would provide students with the civic education necessary to face the future. Hand proposed that these courses constitute no more than one-third of the high school curriculum with the remaining two-thirds devoted to the liberal arts and sciences disciplines (Hand, 1947a, p.197).

As a means of implementing his proposals, Hand (1951) developed and directed the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program (ISSCP) in the late 1940's and early 1950's. The ISSCP was a program of the Illinois State Department of Education to help local school boards conduct studies of how parents, students and teachers thought the school curricula could be improved (p.240). Hand (1953) promoted these studies as vehicles of social democracy, making the schools into "genuinely public institutions" (pp.261-263; also Henderson & Goerwitz, 1950).

Life adjustment education in Illinois was widely considered a success. The movement enjoyed broad political support during the 1940's, including that of the United States Commissioner of Education, who made life adjustment the policy of the federal government and promoted it through several national conferences (Kliebard, 1986, p.251). Life adjustment was incorporated into the curricula of many teacher education programs and into the secondary school curricula of many states. As fast as life adjustment rose during the 1940's, however, it fell during the 1950's, quickly becoming the butt of educational critics and an albatross for progressives.

In the midst of the Cold War culture wars, conservatives complained that life adjustment was a liberal philosophy of communistic conformity and a prescription for mediocrity in a mass society (Smith, 1949, p.90). In support of their complaints, they highlighted extremists within the life adjustment movement who used the theory as a rationalization for anti-intellectualism. The

junior high school principal in Urbana, Illinois, home of the University of Illinois, claimed, for example, that since not everyone needed to read or write in their daily lives, "Not every child has to read, figure, write and spell" in school (Quoted in Karier, 1986, p.314). Critics seized upon such statements and thrashed progressives with them (Bestor, 1953a, p.83; Lynd, 1950, p.46; Smith, 1949, p.24).

6. Bestor's Educational Crusade.

Like progressivism itself, anti-progressivism took various forms. Post-World War II anti-progressivism started as a status revolt of liberal arts and sciences professors against professors of education. As the first members of the Baby Boom generation went off to kindergarten during the late 1940's and early 1950's, the demand for elementary and secondary school teachers began to rise. In response, universities increased the number and percentage of their students taking education courses, and correspondingly increased their education faculties. As a result, a relatively smaller percentage of university students and faculty were left for the liberal arts and sciences disciplines. Professors in the liberal arts and sciences became concerned about these trends and, at many universities, mounted attacks against their education departments. Since most of the education professors espoused progressivism, progressivism became a main target of their attack (Church and Sedlak, 1976, p.401).

A battle of this sort began at the University of Illinois not long after Bestor became a member of the History Department. The attack was begun in 1950 by Harry Fuller (1951), Chair of the Biology Department, in a speech denouncing progressives such as Harold Hand as "neo-Hitlerian" subversives (p.41). Fuller complained that progressives were undermining higher education by substituting life adjustment courses for the traditional disciplines in the University curriculum, demeaning the status of traditional academic professors, and lowering the academic content and the standards of high school curricula. As a result, "the near-idiot and the near-

genius may receive the same grade in the same course" and the best students were suffering a "dwindling of their mental guts" (pp.37-38; see also Fuller, 1956, p.119 et seq). Fuller's speech generated considerable controversy at the University and beyond (Seidlin, 1951, p.205). It was nationally printed and reprinted in 1951 and 1952. Scientific Monthly, which originally published the article, received an unprecedented 248 letters in response, 226 favorable to Fuller's position (Kliebard, 1986, p.260). Fuller was joined in his attacks by Stewart Cairns (1953), Chair of the Mathematics Department, and by Bestor (1952a; 1952b; 1952c), who soon became the leading spokesperson of the anti-progressive campaign (Brickman, 1953, p.393).

The battle against progressive educators seemed to engage Bestor, emotionally and actively, in ways that the discipline of history had not previously done. The quality of Bestor's educational writing during the 1950's was zestful and graceful, very different from the ponderous prose of his historical works. His initial articles during 1952 produced such enormous response that Bestor quickly extended their arguments in his book Educational Wastelands, published in 1953. With the publication of that book, Bestor seemed to come into his own. Stepping out from his father's shadow, some nine years after his father's death, Bestor, for the first time on any publication, dropped the "Jr." from his name on the book's title-page and, thereafter, signed his publications "Arthur Bestor."

a. First Phase: Bucking the Establishment. Bestor's campaign against progressivism went through three phases, as he increasingly widened his audience and broadened his attacks on progressives. What began as an attack on the proponents of life adjustment education became an assault on all progressive educators. What began as a local affair at the University of Illinois became a national cause celebre. And, what began as an attack on conservatives ended as an assault on the Left.

In the first phase, from 1951 through early 1953, Bestor saw himself as bucking the establishment, a rebel who was trying to reform the system from within (Bestor, Jr., 1952b). His arguments were addressed primarily toward fellow academicians through scholarly journals such as The American Scholar, the AAUP Bulletin and Scientific Monthly, with the stated purpose of organizing scholars to retake the universities from the education professors. "The debasement of higher learning began," Bestor (1952b) claimed, "when persons who repudiated the concept of liberal education [i.e. education professors] began to worm their way into colleges and graduate schools" (p.142). He proposed that the academic disciplines take over the training of teachers, thereby eliminating the need for education professors.

In this phase, Bestor (1952a) portrayed life adjustment as part of a conservative trend in America, but also took rhetorical advantage of the Cold War red-scare by comparing life adjustment to Communism and proclaiming that "Across the educational world today stretches an iron curtain that professional educators have fashioned." Denouncing life adjustment educators as "a fifth column" who imprison their students in "slave-labor camps," he called for the liberation of "the free world of science and learning" by eliminating education professors from the universities (pp.114-115).

In support of his charges, Bestor (1952c) repeatedly attacked Harold Hand. Bestor claimed that Hand and other life adjustment advocates "believe that most men have no need for intellectual training" (p.418-419) and promote "the elimination of all the scholarly disciplines" from the high schools (p.437). Bestor accused Hand of rigging the surveys Hand conducted for the ISSCP in order to manufacture support for his life adjustment program in Illinois schools (pp.430-431). Hand became for Bestor a symbol of all that was wrong with education. The vehemence of Bestor's attacks on Hand and other progressives was extraordinary and even

worried some of Bestor's supporters who wished that he could make his criticisms in more civil terms (Alilunas, 1958; Haskew, 1954, p.28; Hodgkins, 1953; McCoy, 1954, p.29; Melby, 1956).

b. Second Phase: Joining the Establishment. In the second phase of his anti-progressive campaign, 1953 through 1956, Bestor presented himself as spokesperson for the educational mainstream, fighting extremists on both the Right and Left. During this period, he addressed a wider audience of educators and citizens through articles in educational journals (Bestor, Jr., 1954a; 1954b), and through popular books, including Educational Wastelands (1953a) and The Restoration of Learning (1955b). In the early 1950's, his primary concern had been with the effects of progressivism on the universities, appealing mainly to fellow academicians. During the mid-1950's, he focussed on the decline of secondary education and thereby appealed to a wider audience of Baby Boomer parents whose children would soon be in high school. His attacks on progressivism, and particularly on William Kilpatrick, his mentor Bagley's old nemesis, grew broader.

Educational Wastelands (1953a) was the most influential book on education in the 1950's (Cremin, 1961, p.344). The book is a sustained attack on progressives' alleged control of secondary schools and schools of education, and their abandonment of the traditional disciplinary curriculum. Published a year after John Dewey's death, the book emphasized Bestor's commitment to Dewey's ideas even as it attacked Dewey's progressive followers (pp.50-51). Condemning progressives for abandoning the high intellectual standards of Dewey, Bestor concluded that both high school students and their teachers were caught in a web of "regressive education" (p.44).

The heart of Educational Wastelands is an elegant defense of the "fundamental disciplines" of English, math, science, history and foreign languages as the core of both teacher education and the high school curriculum (p.13). The defense rests on three arguments. First, Bestor argued,

the liberal disciplines were "the most effective methods which men have been able to devise, through millennia of sustained effort, for liberating and then organizing the powers of the mind" (p.18). The traditional disciplines, Bestor claimed, constituted mankind's consensus of what was important knowledge. Through studying the disciplines, students participated in the community of scholarship, elevating themselves above the trivial pursuits of everyday life, and realizing their potential as human beings.

Second, Bestor argued, the liberal disciplines are the best training for everyday life. "Throughout history the intellectual disciplines have been considered fundamental in education for practical life and for citizenship, as well as in training for the professions" (p.13). Bestor asserted, contrary to the claims of progressives, that the academic disciplines are the best education for life adjustment and vocations, as well as college preparation. "The basic argument for the intellectual disciplines is not [merely] that they lift a man's spirit above the world, but that they equip his mind to enter the world and perform its tasks" (p.15).

Third, Bestor argued, the liberal disciplines are the best form of civic education. Throughout history, he claimed, a liberal education had been one of the principal bulwarks of aristocracy, providing the intellectual strength that had made the old ruling classes great and powerful. The liberal disciplines provided the broad outlook and understanding of society necessary for an effective ruling class. Defining democratic education as an aristocratic education for all, Bestor concluded that in a democratic society, where the whole people were the ruling class, public schools must educate everyone in the liberal disciplines (pp.25-39). Educational Wastelands was a popular sensation, and the book's title was widely used by the mass media in the 1950's as a short hand description of the problematic state of American education (Smith, 1955, p.1678). The publication of the book catapulted Bestor to notoriety as an education guru and leader of the anti-progressive movement (Chalmers, 1955, p.18). Bestor's appeals during this

second phase were more blatantly political, aiming at an audience that might be able, through legislative or administrative action, to throw progressives out of the schools. These appeals increasingly attracted political conservatives who openly opposed mass secondary and higher education. Appearing sometimes to be embarrassed by his supporters, Bestor tried to distinguish his position from theirs, claiming that "I am a firm believer in the principle of universal, public, democratic education," including free high schools, colleges and graduate schools for qualified students (Bestor, Jr., 1953a, p.9).

Progressives responded to Bestor in two main ways. Some responded with scholarly critiques of Bestor's arguments and evidence. In a detailed twenty-five page review of Educational Wastelands, Harold Hand clearly demonstrated that Bestor had misstated and misrepresented his evidence against the life adjustment movement (Hand, 1954, pp.27, 35, 44). Hand and others similarly critiqued Bestor's other writings as based on shoddy scholarship (Hand, 1957; Hand, 1958; also Burnett, 1954, p.74; Metcalf, 1957). Other progressives responded to Bestor with vituperation. Bestor and his allies were accused of trying to destroy public education (Scott & Hill, 1954, p.7; Eklund, 1954, p.350). Bestor was accused of being paranoid, delusional and dishonest (Trow, 1953b, p.151; also Trow, 1953a, p.122; 1954, pp.21, 26). Some of Bestor's critics attempted to have his articles excluded from educational journals on the grounds that he was professionally incompetent and anti-education. A group of education professors at the University of Illinois tried to stop the University Press from publishing Educational Wastelands on the grounds that it did not meet acceptable standards of scholarship (Hand, 1954, p.27). These efforts proved futile, and Bestor was able to gain an even wider audience for his articles and books by portraying himself as a victim of McCarthy-style repression (Bestor, Jr., 1955a, p.199; Brickman, 1953, p.154).

Bestor (1955a) relished the vituperation and responded in kind (pp.192 et seq.). But he never responded to the scholarly critiques of his educational writings and even repeated what were clearly inaccurate statements. The meticulous historian careful to document every assertion had become an educational warrior apparently willing to play fast and loose with the facts. Hand's detailed critique of Educational Wastelands went unheeded, and Bestor repeated the errors from that book in subsequent publications (Bestor, Jr., 1955a, pp.148, 348 footnote). Unwilling to give his critics any credence, Bestor ignored them and, thereby, denied them a mass audience. Even as progressives were destroying his arguments in educational journals, Bestor was repeating those same arguments in the mass media. While his critics won the intellectual debate among contemporary scholars, Bestor won the propaganda war for public opinion.

c. Third Phase: Leading the Establishment. In the third phase of his campaign, from 1956 through 1959, Bestor became a national spokesperson for the educational establishment, addressing the general public through interviews and articles in the mass media. The mainstream media widely accepted his critique of progressivism, and by the end of the decade, Bestor was the education guru for the U.S News & World Report (Bestor, Jr., 1956; 1957c; 1958b). Although he still considered himself a political liberal, most of Bestor's allies were not liberals and his critiques were routinely used by others to support anti-liberal goals (Rickover, 1959, pp.124, 227; Rudd, 1957, pp.25, 107, 195, 281). In 1956, Bestor joined with Mortimer Smith, an avowed political reactionary (Smith, 1949, pp.87-92), in establishing the Council on Basic Education to promote Essentialism in education (Church & Sedlak, 1976, p.405; Cremin, 1961, p.346). Reflecting both the evolution of his own thought and the expectations of his increasingly conservative audience, Bestor's educational positions became more conservative. In this phase, he complained, for example, that high schools were being degraded by a mass of unfit students. Echoing the views of many of his conservative supporters,

Bestor opined that it might be better to return to the pre-progressive practices of the early 1900's, when only a small minority of people went to high school (Bestor, Jr., 1956, p.72; 1957a, pp.14, 16; 1957b, p.5; 1958b, p.72; 1959; see Bell, 1949, pp.5, 72; Rickover, 1959, pp.23-24, 154).

By the late 1950's, Bestor was celebrating the demise of progressivism, but seemingly without the satisfaction he had anticipated. Bestor found himself still complaining about the lack of a national commitment to liberal education (Bestor, Jr., 1956, p.82; 1958b, p.72). Contrary to his expectations, the defeat of progressivism had not automatically led to the triumph of his liberal ideals. Instead, in the autumn of 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first space satellite and precipitated a new crisis in American education. Pundits blamed American schools as the reason the United States was losing the space race to the Communists and decided that a more scientific curriculum, not a more liberal education, was the remedy (Cremin, 1961, p.347; Rickover, 1959). In the wake of Sputnik, Bestor's critiques of progressivism and calls for a more liberal curriculum quickly became anachronisms (Karrier, 1985, p.249). The Cold War had moved on, leaving Bestor behind, still fighting the previous battle (Bestor, Jr., 1972, p.18; 1985, p.228).

7. A Postmortem for the Cold War in Education?

But now the Cold War is over. Liberals need no longer fear attacks from either Communists or anti-Communists. The pressure that inflated the differences between progressives and Essentialists, and drove many of the latter toward conservatism, are no longer operative. Liberal educators, nonetheless, continue to split into rival camps and fight each other with the vehemence of the 1950's. It is a momentum, a veritable habit that seems hard to break.

Take, for example, the battle over teaching mainstream culture versus cultural pluralism. This is an issue that divided Bestor and his progressive opponents during the 1950's and that continues to divide liberals today. On the one side, multicultural progressives, such as James Banks (1996), worry about the lag of American culture behind the realities of American society

(p.3). Banks argues that the "outsider" view of the world provided by the mainstream liberal arts and sciences must be supplemented with an "insider" view that can only be provided by a student's own culture (p.54). Like the progressives of the 1950's, Banks recognizes the importance of teaching the liberal disciplines but wants to approach these academic subjects through children's multicultural backgrounds. Banks repeatedly emphasizes that a child "must function effectively in both his culture and in the mainstream culture" (1977, p.24; also 1988, p.36). His goal is for students to learn about their shared culture, the culture of the liberal disciplines, through learning about their own multi-cultures and thereby to promote social, economic, racial, ethnic and gender equality (1996, p.30; also 1991). Liberal social values, Banks concludes, depend on progressive education.

On the other side, cultural conservationists, such as E.D. Hirsch (1996), seek to save liberal values through traditional education. A self-styled Essentialist, Hirsch is willing to let children learn about their own subcultures but only after first learning about mainstream liberal culture. Citing William Bagley and Arthur Bestor as his mentors (p.16), Hirsch defines himself as a political liberal who is willing to join educational conservatives in order to defeat progressivism and restore the liberal disciplines to their rightful place in the school curriculum (pp.7, 126). Like Bestor, Hirsch (1987) worries about the loss of America's liberal tradition and argues that the "only sure avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged children" is a liberal education (p.XIII). Recycling Bestor's arguments, Hirsch claims that a democratic education for the masses must be the sort of education for power that only aristocrats used to receive. Echoing Bestor's attacks on progressivism as regressive education, Hirsch argues that "To withhold traditional culture from the school curriculum, and therefore from students, in the name of progressive ideas is in fact an unprogressive action that helps preserve the political and economic status quo" (pp.23-24). Like Bestor, Hirsch (1996) favors progressive and pluralistic methods of education, and cites Dewey

approvingly in this regard (pp.58, 112, 128), but excoriates William Kilpatrick and his disciples for destroying the liberal curriculum (pp.52, 76, 95, 118).

The rhetorical exchanges between these two camps are vehement. But, as with Bestor and Merle Curti during the 1950's, their theoretical differences are really only matters of emphasis rather than principle. Hirsch (1987) himself says that a student's ethnicity should provide his/her primary culture and that the liberal arts and sciences should be merely his/her "second culture" (p.22). Hirsch (1996), nonetheless, repeatedly caricatures the positions of progressives, setting up rhetorical straw men that he can easily knock down (pp.25, 81, 137, 149, 152). Just as Bestor flailed progressives with the example of a high school principal who used progressive ideas to argue that not all children needed to learn math, Hirsch cites as an example of present-day progressivism an elementary school principal who thinks children do not need to know geography (p.55). As with Bestor and Curti, the vehemence of Hirsch's rhetoric against progressivism is not justified by the proposals of progressives such as Banks.

Moreover, the theoretical differences between Banks and Hirsch become even smaller in practice. Unlike most conservatives, who want children to learn only about the dominant WASP American culture and to accept it uncritically, both Banks and Hirsch want children to learn and think critically about both their own multi-cultures and mainstream liberal culture. A comparison of Banks' fifth grade history textbook, The World Around Us: United States and Its Neighbors (1995), and the history sections of Hirsch's guide book for fifth graders, What Your 5th Grader Needs to Know (1993), shows basic similarities in their treatment of most issues. In his treatment of Native Americans, for example, Banks (1995) has a chapter describing how Native Americans lived in different environments and how they adaptively responded to political and environmental changes. Banks allows Native Americans to speak for themselves and has a section in which 17th century Native Americans and Europeans debate their positions on European settlement (pp.100-

123). Hirsch (1993), whose book was written with the help of seventeen advisors on multiculturalism including several Native Americans (p.VII), intersperses sections on Native Americans and European settlers. Hirsch describes Native American cultures in terms very similar to those used by Banks (pp.192-198) and allows Native Americans to speak for themselves (p.45). There are differences between the two books on this and other subjects, differences worth arguing about but not worth fighting over, not worth lending support to conservatives who would still idealize the battles of cowboys against Indians.

The importance of reconsidering Arthur Bestor lies in the fact that the Cold War is over and the political crises that inflamed the educational differences between progressives and Essentialists are long gone. There is no longer any reason to fight those old battles. As we enter the 21st century, at a time in which the values of educational equality and cultural diversity are threatened by those who oppose most of the things for which both liberal Essentialists and progressives have stood since the 1950's, it might finally be time for progressive educators to acknowledge the value and values of Bestor's best ideas, for Bestor's liberal descendants to acknowledge the progressive underpinnings of his work, and for the Cold War in education to be declared over.

April, 1999

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